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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0666  
INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 000699

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: OAS HITS THE RIGHT NOTES IN ELECTION REPORT

REF: A. SANTO DOMINGO 0418

[1](#)B. SANTO DOMINGO 0668

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: On May 6, the OAS's Electoral Observation Mission issued a "Pre-Electoral Report" on the campaign for the May 16 presidential election. The report praised the performance of the Central Elections Board (JCE); criticized the ruling PLD party for spending state resources on the campaign; and, effectively put the opposition PRD party on notice that technical problems regarding the new electronic vote count were not significant enough to affect the outcome of the election. (The full text of the report can be found at <http://www.clavedigital.com/ktmllite/files/uploads/Elecciones%202008/COMUNICADO%20OEA%20DOCUMENTO.doc>.) End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) In the report, the OAS stated that, "the elections are being administered correctly" and noted that "the electoral calendar is advancing effectively (and) no one doubts that the will of the people expressed at the polls will be respected." "All of this," according to the report, "is possible because the country has electoral authorities that are credible and possess important technical experience." (Note: Since the electoral fraud of 1994, significant USAID funds have been used to strengthen the JCE and support civil society monitoring of the Board, and the results have been positive.)

[1](#)3. (U) Regarding the PLD-led government's heavy spending on advertisements (Ref A), the OAS said that, "it appears evident that a significant part of the information that the government transmits has an electoral objective (and that) it has crossed the line between a government's informative actions and election campaigning. Considering that the current rules do not establish with absolute precision what that line is, it is especially important that the government make an effort so as not to fall into practices that would give an unjust advantage to one side."

[1](#)4. (U) Concerning the opposition parties' criticism of the new electronic system for transmitting electoral results (Ref B), the OAS stated that, "The Mission notes the parties' concerns regarding the uncertainties that could result in delays or failures in the (vote count) scanning process; however, (the Mission) also understands that the scanning of the vote count sheets does not influence the final result and, essentially, consists of an innovation in the process that is designed to accelerate and improve the knowledge of election results.... Political parties have a responsibility to cooperate with the JCE by not generating misunderstandings regarding the true role of the scanners in the vote count."

[1](#)5. (SBU) The OAS also praised the "lack of serious violent

incidents" in the campaign. The opposition agrees: In a meeting with POLOFF, Neney Cabrera, PRD candidate Miguel Vargas Maldonado's national campaign director, said that this campaign had had the least amount of violence that he had witnessed in many years. (Note: The last day that campaigning is permitted is May 14 and, traditionally, the political parties here respect the one-day cooling off period, which includes a ban on the sale of alcohol.)

¶6. (SBU) The JCE's response to the OAS report was very positive, indicating a good working relationship between the two organizations.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: The OAS, JCE, and the important local NGO Participacion Ciudadana have all now criticized the ruling PLD for using government spending to favor incumbent candidate Leonel Fernandez (Ref A). It is difficult to quantify the effect of the government's actions; certainly, if the opinion polls that show a lead of 15 to 24 percent for Fernandez hold true on election day, he will likely emerge with an adequate mandate despite the stain of the watchdogs' reports. We found the OAS's comments on the new electronic scanners to be very helpful since, as we interpret the report, the OAS is putting the opposition on notice that minor technical problems should not be used as a justification to disrespect the official election result.

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